

Dear Labor and Public Employees Committee,

The Bill, HB 5279, will greatly reduce the opportunities available for our clients. The bill is intended to promote equality for people with disabilities yet will unintentionally cause great hardship for some whose disability makes it challenging to find employment. Many of our clients have found the opportunity to work through employers that pay based on their abilities.

With 75-80% unemployment for people with disabilities it seems counterproductive to remove the opportunities provided by these employers. For our clients, employment is not just a means of making money, it provides them with a sense of purpose and an opportunity to be apart of the work force. I asked some of my clients how they felt about these proposed changes and received answers such as "piece rate helps us work towards something better" –Kristina S; "I want to be like everybody else and work"- Tyler M. This bill will make it very difficult for some of these individuals to compete for jobs without the incentive that these arrangements provide employers.

I support the elimination of a sub minimum wage, but more thought will have to be placed on how to increase job opportunities for people with disabilities, who, if this bill is passed, will have to compete for higher paying jobs.

Nery Aldana

Job Coach

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Greetings Labor and Public Employees Committee,

Listed below are some additional statements from Chapel Haven clients whom receive special wages for their work:

- Tyler - "Having a job means I can go out, be productive, and not stay indoors each day watching television. I would like to go to my job and be productive and feel good about myself. I came to Chapel Haven to learn life and work skills."
- James - "You are taking advantage of my disabilities and making it harder for me to go out in the community and look for a job. Bring back the jobs that were sent out of the country, make jobs for us not take it away. We have a life we need to eat, pay our bills and be able to be independent."
- Kristina- "I like being out in the community, learning new skills makes me useful and earn money for my every day requirements. We need programs on a daily basis, we need to interact with other people, please make more jobs available for people with disabilities."
- David- "I like to get up each day happy knowing I have a job out in the community; it would make me very sad if I cannot go out and work. I did not chose to be born with a disability and I'm not able to go out and look for jobs for myself. I work at my own speed and learn new stuff each day."
- Michael- "I am not able to go out and work independently; I don't like being stuck in my apartment, not going anywhere, watching television and eating. No more working with other people, stop being mean, make jobs for us, we are people with needs too."
- Diana- "I go to work to make money for my needs and wants, too much downtime sitting around and be bored doing nothing is not good. Make jobs for us, we work at our own pace, no competition. I can't help the way I was born."